



AMERICAN OSTEOPATHIC ASSOCIATION
TREATING OUR FAMILY AND YOURS



March 1, 2017

The Honorable Roy Cooper
Governor of North Carolina
North Carolina Office of the Governor
20301 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, North Carolina 27699

Dear Governor Cooper:

The American Osteopathic Association (AOA) and North Carolina Osteopathic Medical Association (NCOMA), representing nearly 130,000 osteopathic physicians and medical students, including over 2,000 in North Carolina, are committed to ensuring a high quality, patient-centered, cost-efficient health care system for our nation. Today, osteopathic physicians (DOs) represent nearly 1 in 5 U.S. physicians, and 1 in 4 medical students. DOs practice in every medical specialty and in every state across the nation. The osteopathic approach to medicine is best expressed as a partnership between physicians and their patients to improve health, promote wellness, and enhance prevention.

It is our understanding that the incoming Administration and Congress are seeking input from Governors as they consider potential changes to our nation's health care system. As you work with federal policymakers to promote the flexibility needed to address the access, quality and cost issues facing your state, the AOA and NCOMA would like to emphasize that as part of the osteopathic philosophy, it is our priority to ensure access to affordable care and coverage for our patients.

While great progress has been made over the last decade to advance such efforts, we also recognize and support the need to improve the current system. We therefore urge you to promote any approach to reform that maintains the stability of insurance markets, minimizes uncertainty, and encompasses the following priorities. We offer our assistance and expertise as you introduce and debate these efforts:

- Foundation based on prevention and care coordination: Primary care is the cornerstone of effective patient-centered care and coordination. We continue to support the use of health information technology as an important tool for achieving care coordination, but encourage state and federal policymakers to revisit the current mandates which employ flawed systems that interfere in the physician-patient relationship.

With the osteopathic philosophy to care focused on the needs of the 'whole person' (mind, body, spirit, and environment), we strongly support delivery models like the patient-centered medical home that enhance and promote the foundational role of primary care physicians and emphasize the provision of coordinated care across the health care spectrum. We strongly support health care reforms that incentivize and broaden opportunities for physicians to participate in more of these models across the payor landscape in order to continue the transformation towards a value-based health care system.

Coverage of evidence-based, preventive services without cost-sharing to patients should also be preserved as a requirement of insurance plans.

- The patient-physician relationship must be preserved: The establishment and ongoing maintenance of stable physician-patient relationships is critical to patient adherence and achievement of desired outcomes. Physicians' clinical judgments, in partnership with their patients, should be the primary driver of care decisions.
- Development of a strong physician workforce is critical: The osteopathic medical profession has long committed to ensuring care for patients in rural and underserved communities, as evidenced in part by the establishment of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine in these very areas. Yet current restrictions on post-graduate training have resulted in shortages in many areas of primary and specialty care. To ensure patients are receiving the best quality care and attention that they deserve, we support new and innovative models for the distribution of graduate medical education funding at the state and federal level. Additionally, payment models should incentivize physicians to provide care in rural and underserved areas, specifically in those specialties of greatest need.
- Coverage and access to care must be ensured: Whether their coverage is through a private or public payor, any patient should have coverage for, and access to, a core set of essential benefits and a broad network of physicians to include primary and specialty care across all aspects of medical and behavioral health. We firmly believe that patients should not be charged higher premiums nor denied coverage based on their pre-existing health care conditions or past medical history, sex, disability, race or ethnicity, family history, or gender. Lastly, there should be a safety net of care that is accessible to the most vulnerable in our nation of all ages who lack the resources to access coverage directly themselves.

The AOA and NCOMA look forward to working with the State of North Carolina, the new Administration, and the 115th Congress to advance necessary changes that increase access to high-quality, affordable health care. Should you or your staff have any questions, please contact Nick Schilligo, AOA's Associate Vice President for State Government Affairs, at nschilligo@osteopathic.org or (312) 202-8185.

Sincerely,



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President, AOA



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